



Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority
Commission de l'enseignement spécial
de provinces de l'Atlantique

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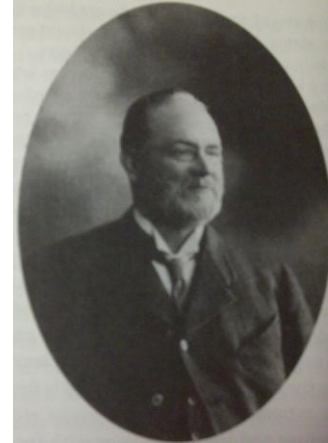
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Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority

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Nominee: Charles Frederick Fraser

Position and Location: Deceased Teacher and Superintendent of
Halifax Asylum for the blind later known as the Halifax School for the Blind,

Career years of service: 1873-1923.

Field: Education

To whom it may concern:

I would like to nominate Sir Charles Frederick Fraser for installation into the APH Hall of Fame. In 1866 William Murdoch (a Scottish merchant) passed away leaving 5,000 pounds for the establishment of a school for the blind. This school opened in 1871.

Sir Charles Frederick Fraser was born in 1850 and was the son of Benjamin DeWolf Fraser and Elizabeth Allison Fraser of Windsor, Nova Scotia, Canada. When he was seven years old he lost his sight in one eye when whittling a stick with a pocket knife. They were unable to repair his eye. He attended elementary school in Windsor until thirteen. The eye sight in his other eye slowly deteriorated. At the age of 13, Fraser was enrolled in the Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind in Boston, now known as Perkins School for the Blind. He attended this school for six years. He left Perkins in 1872 and returned to Nova Scotia.

The Halifax School for the Blind



Fraser was an intelligent student and an accomplished musician. By 1872 he was completely blind and he decided to abandon his plans to pursue a career in business and in 1873 Sir Charles Frederick became the first superintendent of the new Halifax Asylum for the Blind now known as the Sir Frederick Fraser. At this time this institution had only four students and a small building. Over the course of his career, enrollment expanded significantly. In the 1920s the average enrollment was about 120-140 students. These students came from all three Maritime Provinces and Newfoundland. One must remember at this time Newfoundland was a colony of Great Britain and it was Fraser's work that convinced parents to send their children to the school in Halifax. Your appreciation of this feat will be even greater if you keep in mind that it would require several days of travel within the colony itself to reach a seaport and then about a week of sailing to reach the port of Halifax.

Fraser developed programs at the school, these programs emphasized literacy and the skills required for social and economic independence. The younger children had kindergarten training, followed by four years of grammar school and six years of high school. Fraser strongly advocated physical education and mobility training, and he introduced gymnastics, walking clubs, and ice skating on the school pond; in 1915 the Halifax Local Council of Women donated playground equipment. Musical training was also offered, and many students, such as Arthur M. Chisholm, prepared for careers such as music teachers, piano tuners, and church organists. For years Fraser himself taught music along with academic subjects and chair-caning. The school Industrial program also included broom- and basket-making and similar kinds of craft production. In 1891, typing classes were introduced, and over the next several years massage, shampooing, and bookkeeping were added to the curriculum.

Fraser also, earnestly pressed the provincial government to provide free education for the blind, which was enacted in 1882. Two years later the name of the institution was changed to Halifax School for the Blind to reflect its educational orientation. A provincial circulating library of Braille books was established by Fraser in 1881, and in 1898 he was successful in persuading the Canadian Post Office to handle Braille books postage-free which is still in effect today.

Fraser was also a lobbyist, travelling throughout the Maritimes with groups of teachers and students, lecturing and presenting concerts to promote the school and raise money. He created an endowment fund for the blind to create additional funding for a multitude of programs to benefit individuals who were blind or visually impaired.

In 1883, Fraser expanded a financial assistance program for graduates embarking on careers or further training. He also founded the Canadian Printing House for the Blind which was housed at the school (1901).

Fraser was involved in advocating for the prevention of blindness, especially ophthalmia neonatorum, which could be treated if caught early. In 1911, the NS assembly passed legislation requiring physicians and nurses to report cases of this disease.

Honors:

Fraser's contribution to the welfare of the blind was significant and he received many awards, which included honorary degrees from King's College in Windsor and Dalhousie University in Halifax and special recognition from the provincial legislature in 1913. In June 1914 He was knighted. He was referred to as the "the blind Knight of Nova Scotia". In 1916 he began the Endowment Fund for the Blind to generate additional money for the school, the extension movement, the Maritime Association for the Blind, He also supported the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), which was established in 1918. In that year he served as a consultant to both the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind and the Ontario government, and he also presented a number of papers at national and international meetings in field of vision loss. He retired from the superintendent position in 1923 and he passed away in 1925.

Publications Edited by Sir Frederick Fraser:

The Critic, which later merged with the Canadian Colliery Guardian (Halifax).

Publications about Sir Frederick Fraser:

Mary A.E.A. McNeil (1939), The Blind Knight of Nova Scotia. University of Minnesota: University Press

Donald Wilfred Fogerty (1960), Education of the Blind in Atlantic Provinces. Saint Mary's University

As a former student of Halifax School for the Blind and now a teacher of the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority I put forward this letter in support of his nomination to the Hall of Fame. I personally was positively impacted by the efforts of Fraser and continue to see many students who have been influenced by the accomplishments of this incredible man. I would not be the person I am today if I had not had the opportunity to attend the Sir Frederick Fraser School. Because I received mobility training as a young child I have the confidence and skills I need to travel the world. I have taken university courses in Canada and the United States and without this training I would not have been able to attend these classes and therefore I would not be successful as a teacher. It is because I went to a school where I had peers and mentors that I could look up to that allowed me to believe that I could accomplish anything. My education at this school provided me with many opportunities such as gymnastics, ice skating, music classes and physical education classes that otherwise would not have been available to me. A visually impaired student at that time, in the Nova Scotia public school system, would not have been encouraged to take part in these types of activities. It was through my participation in these activities that I developed self confidence and drive to persevere when things were challenging.

Please accept my letter of support for the nomination of this man who dedicated his life to the betterment of students who were blind and visually impaired. I appreciate your consideration for inducting this remarkable man into your Hall of Fame.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sheila Jamieson", written over a horizontal line.

Sheila Jamieson
Supervisor of Residential,
Summer and Weekend Programs
Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority

